

ASSISTING READY RESERVE PERSONNEL AND THEIR FAMILIES WITH ACTIVE DUTY DEPLOYMENTS

BEFORE THEY DEPART:

Know and consider:

- Who will be deployed/has activation orders; for when and where,
- Who will be staying behind and where, and
- When is the deployed employee returning.

Offer the opportunity (with you or the EAP) for the deploying employee (and/or their family) to discuss the deployment.

Assist those being activated in the identification and accomplishment of the multiple out-processing tasks required by the Government/DEA. The Administrative Officer in your Division should also assist with/guide that process.

Jointly discuss and plan the preservation of the deploying employee's position (or a similar position) and (to the greatest extent possible) the sustainment of the work they've got underway. Fully identify and address any concerns they have about the preservation of their position. If you are unable to speak with full authority on the subject, seek guidance from Division Executives on the subject.

To the extent desired, help the employee develop a plan to provide support to their family. Who is their "natural support system" and how will they help? Are their other Division/Office families who have been through this experience and would be willing to provide suggestions or support during the absence?

Inform the employee of the availability of Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and Trauma Team member (TTM) assistance during their absence. Be sure they will pass this information on to family members.

Be sure they have your telephone contact numbers for questions that may arise. The EAP Headquarters number is 202-307-8160. The EAP's 24-hour Help-Line is 800-275-7460. The DEA Command Center number is 202-307-4228.

Respectfully ask about insurance, wills, living wills, powers of attorney and other legal and administrative documents that will/might be necessary for the family to function on their own.

Ask if they have completed and securely stored a "Pre-Deployment Checklist" such as can be found at www.ameriforce.net/deployment, and ensure they have completed a DEA

Confidential Employee Profile which can be obtained from the Employee Assistance Program.

DURING THEIR DEPLOYMENT:

Be sure the deployee and family understand your sincere interest in them and your availability to provide DEA information and problem-solving assistance. Be available as a DEA point of contact for the deployee and family members.

As needed and desired, mobilize office personnel (and their spouses) to reach out to the deployee and their family periodically throughout the deployment. Try to keep them as part of the larger "Office Family".

Informally provide the deployee/family with any information you think might be relevant to their health or well-being (office activities, pay raises, changes in health insurance, important administrative deadlines, etc).

Remind them of the availability of Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and Trauma Team member (TTM) assistance during their absence. Be sure they pass this information on to family members.

As they get close to their return date, establish contact if possible.

Check with the Division Administrative Officer and or Headquarters Human Resources and identify the tasks necessary to reactivate their active employment with the DEA. Provide contact information for those persons/Offices they will need for that process.

Identify other Reserve/Guard returnees in the Office/Division. Ask if they are willing to share their reentry/transition expertise with the pending returnee to ease that process. Also have them ask if their spouses are willing to do the same.

UPON THEIR RETURN:

Be prepared for returnees. Make them feel welcome and needed.

Hold a "back-to-work" conference with the returnee before they actually begin full-time work. Explain any changes that may have occurred in the Office, their position, staffing, policy, workload, projects/cases they were working on before they left.

Take some time to listen carefully to their needs and concerns. Agree to collaborate to problem-solve any reentry issues that may arise.

Introduce them to other Reserve/Guard returnees in the Office/Division. Have them offer their reentry/transition expertise to the returnee. Provide any spouse-to-spouse contact information that may have been obtained

Review and offer assistance and/or training to best reintegrate the employee with the DEA. Provide contact information for those persons/Offices they will need for that process. If possible, have the Administrative Officer (AO) stop by or call the employee to initiate that process.

Meet with your office staff to discuss the impending return. Openly discuss accommodation issues and the impact of the reintegration on other positions in the office. Dispel myths about personality changes or impairments that non-military personnel sometimes hold. Set a climate of positive expectations.

ONCE THEY START WORK:

Hold an office welcoming event to foster a sense of appreciation and community. A separate evening event to include family members may be equally appropriate.

Understand that war zone deployments can be emotionally powerful experiences. Be flexible and prepared to make some accommodations to facilitate their reentry into the DEA workforce. “Do not”, however treat any DEA employee “differently” solely because they have been on a military deployment to a war zone.

There may be a necessary period of readjustment during which the returnee might seem “different” or “changed” from their pre-deployment selves. This is temporary, but be sure to give adequate space and time for that process to play out.

“Do” show appreciation and celebrate the returnee’s sacrifice. “Do not” put returnee on display nor in situations where they may be “pumped” to discuss their experiences.

Not all returnees will have positive opinions of their experience or the political issues surrounding it. Avoid such discussions and putting the returnee in the position of the “Well you’ve been there, what’s your opinion?” expert.

Don’t “generalize”, but do “personalize” you responses and assistance. Every returnee will not have had the same experiences, reactions or needs. The best way to be helpful as a Supervisor/Office is to “ASK” the returnee how you can assist them and their family and leave them in charge of “whether” any accommodations are desired and “how” to undertake them.

Job skill currency should be respectfully assessed. Position essential skills (such as rules of engagement for Agents in potentially life threatening situations) may have been relearned via military training/experience and may need to be relearned for safety/liability reasons.

Some returnees will have military medical appointments. Be flexible so that work schedules may have to be adjusted to fit.

Be aware that as a group combat returnees will have a slightly elevated risk of adjustment difficulties upon their return. If they are experiencing one or more of the following and they are not improving (or in fact are getting worse), you should strongly consider a counseling session with the employee and/or contacting the EAP for a Management Consultation and/or a referral:

Personal Indicators

- Anxiety, nervousness, tension, stress
- Sadness, despondency, depression, worry
- Moodiness irritability, anger
- Recurrent illness, or physical symptoms without medical explanation
- Substance misuse or abuse
- Recurrent difficulty dealing with feelings or situations

Work Indicators

- Frequent mistakes/Accidents
- Missed deadlines
- Bad decisions/Errors in judgment
- Complaints from customers/supervisors/peers
- Alternating periods of high and low productivity
- Difficulty in concentrating, handling complex assignments, or recalling instructions or details
- Problems with attendance
- Problematic relationships with peers
- Difficulty with bosses or subordinates

Home Indicators

- Difficulties with family or friends
 - Aggressive or hostile interactions
 - Frequent conflict and arguments
 - Overreacting to real or imagined criticism
 - Withdrawal or avoiding others
- Pathological coping (drinking/overeating/gambling)
- Worsening debt/Compulsive shopping
- Behavior, school or relationship problems with children

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Ameriforce Deployment Guide (www.ameriforce.net/deployment)

Fact sheets and information for service member and families on deployment and post-deployment issues. Updated several times each year.

Combat Veterans and Law Enforcement

(www.TheIACP.ORG/PublicationsGuides/Projects/EmployingReturningCombatVeterans/tabid/494/Default.aspx) Developed from interviews and focus groups with military veterans serving in law enforcement, this guide shares veterans experiences, tips for successful transitioning from deployment and lists support agencies and networks available to veterans.

Courage to Care Campaign (www.usuhs.mil/psy/courage.html)

On-line fact sheets on military deployment, relationship and reintegration issues sponsored by the U.S. Military's medical school in Bethesda Maryland.

Employer support of the National Guard and Reserves (www.esgr.org)

Fact sheets and resources for employers and Guard and Reserves members on all aspects of workplace reentry.

Law Enforcement Leader's Guide on Combat Veterans

(www.TheIACP.ORG/PublicationsGuides/Projects/EmployingReturningCombatVeterans/tabid/494/Default.aspx) Provides recommendations to law enforcement executives and supervisors on how support returning veterans and curriculum outlines on veteran-relevant topics for in-service trainings and academy instruction.

The National Mental Health Association

(www.nmha.org/reassurance/cominghome/returningtowork.cfm)

Fact sheets and information for Reservists and Guard and their employers.